

AMENDMENTS TO THE SPECIFICATION

- A. Please replace the paragraph beginning at line 20 of page 9 with the following paragraph:

It is to be noted that low-k dielectric 323 may absorb humidity when exposed to air or wet solvents. This may occur, for example, after etching a passivation level to expose metal pads. In that case, spacers may be formed on exposed portions of low-k dielectric 323. For example, silicon nitride spacers may be deposited along a sidewall including low-k dielectric 323. Techniques for protecting a low-k dielectric in a passivation level are also described in the commonly-assigned disclosure US Application No. 10/184,336, entitled "PROTECTION OF A LOW-K DIELECTRIC IN A PASSIVATION LEVEL," Attorney Docket No. 10002.000900 (PM02007), filed on ~~the same day as this application~~ June 26, 2002 by Mira Ben-Tzur, Krishnaswamy Ramkumar, Tito Chowdhury, and Michal Efrati Fastow. The just mentioned disclosure is incorporated herein by reference in its entirety.